

The Beehive Design Collective

NARRATIVE

The storybook companion to an epic illustration...



The Third Poster in a GRAPHIC TRILOGY
about Free Trade, Militarization, and
Corporate Colonialism in the Americas

www.beehivecollective.org

THE TRILOGY...

In 2001 the Beehive printed the first in a series of posters depicting the struggle against corporate globalization in the Americas. We began by celebrating the social movements that brought down the negotiations of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in the decade following the signing of NAFTA. The FTAA graphic features a spiders' web of corporate controlled development, mass media, and militarization. In 2002, after traveling to Colombia and Ecuador to learn more about the impacts of U.S. funding for the War on Drugs, we released the second poster in the trilogy. The Plan Colombia poster shows the devastating impacts of aerial fumigation of coca crops, and also digs deeper to expose the long legacy of colonialism and ongoing resource extraction in the Americas.

MESOAMERICA RESISTE!

The third and final image in the trilogy focuses on resistance to the mega-infrastructure projects that facilitate extraction and the neoliberal model of "development". These graphics reflect our efforts to go beyond illustrating just the bad news, to also sharing stories of collective action and inspiration, stories of other worldviews and ways of life. Though the poster's details come from specific struggles in southern Mexico and Central America, the bigger picture extends to the entire Western hemisphere and beyond, telling the story of what time it is on the planet in this era of rapid climate change and extreme loss of cultural and ecological diversity.

The Beehive's collaborative approach

A team of storytellers, illustrators, activists, educators, and media makers created the Mesoamérica Resiste graphics campaign through an intensive, grassroots research and design process. The project started in 2004 when an initial group of Bees traveled through Mexico and Central America to meet with communities directly impacted by the infrastructure projects of Plan Puebla Panama. Since then, our ongoing research took a variety of forms, from large international gatherings to local round tables, interviews, emails, and informal conversations. The result is a graphic that translates these perspectives into an intricately woven visual narrative.

THE LAND BRIDGE

THANK YOU

We're grateful for the collaboration and support of many organizations and people who contributed to the research and design of these graphics:

Alianza por la Vida y la Paz, Amigos del Lago Izabal, ARPAS, ASTAC, CALDH, Casa de Cultura de Guapiles, CEI, CEIBA, Centro Ecu-menico Antonio de Valdivieso, CIEP, CIEPAC, Colectivo Pablo Presente, Comité Sí a la Vida, COMPA, COMPPA, COMPITCH, CONAMINH, CONAPAMG, CONAVIGUA CONFRAS, CONPAH, CONIC, Cooperativa La Técnica, Cooperativa Nuevo Horizonte, COPIN, CORDES - CCR, Corpwatch, Cortam-ortaja, CRIPDES, Data Center, Encuentro Popular, Equipo Maíz, Escuela Normal de Occidente, FECON, FECOU, FEGER, Frente Petenero Contra Las Represas, Frente Social de Matagalpa, GEO, Grupo de Teatro de San Juan, Grupo de Trabajo Colectivo del Istmo, HIJOS, IDEX, ILRF, KAIROS, La Vida en Maquila, Leon por la Paz, LIFT, Madre Tierra, Mama Maquín, Mesa Global, Mesa Nacional Campesina, MOCAMDERCO,

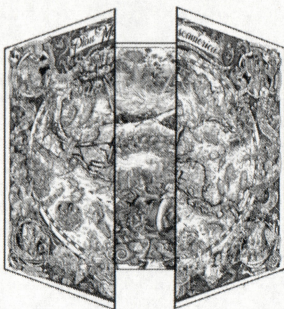
Movimiento de Trabajadores y Campesinos, Museo de la Palabra y de la Imagen, Radio Venceremos, Nicaragua Network, Nuestra Realidad, OFRANEH, PAT, PROMA-BOS, Prometheus Radio, Radio Neshon, Radio Utan Kaj La Voz del Pueblo, Red COMAL, Red de Organizaciones Civiles de Ometepe, Reserva Acuífera Gualipés, Reunión Nacional Contra las Represas, Rights Action, SOA Watch, Trópico Verde, UCIZONI

...and support from many entomologists, biologists, artists, professors and students of bees, insects, animals or economy: antweb.org, Thia Artemis, Stephen Buchmann, Adam Bugbuilder, Karen Cangliosi, Debby Kaspari, Harriet DeJong, Gina Ferrada Torres, Filiberto, Connie, Bill Grier, Charlie Koenen, UTexas Library, Julio Lopez, Frank Marengi, Paul Molyneaux, Tristan, Nicholas Mrosovsky, Laurence Packer, Jeff Schwilk, Teresa Zepeda ...and many others

CLASHING WORLDVIEWS

The colonizers' view

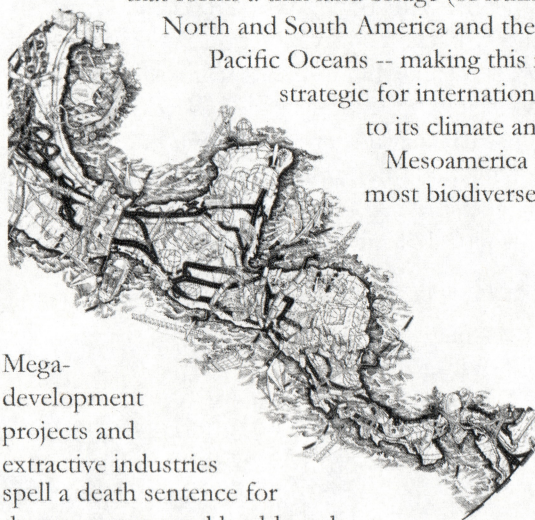
This poster folds to create a square that opens to a larger image inside. With the shutters closed, the outside of the poster resembles an old Spanish conquistador's map of Mesoamerica. The map is a top-down look at the region and draws parallels between colonial history and modern day capitalism. Outsiders who have no connection with the land have drawn this map, with motives of extraction and profit.



The view from the grassroots

Opening up the poster, the world on the inside is drawn from the perspective of an ant on the ground at the base of a towering Ceiba tree. This ground's eye view reflects the experiences of those who are rooted in a place and directly affected by the plans on the map. Between the roots of the Ceiba, lively scenes illuminate stories of grassroots organizing and community resilience. This graphic documents many examples of alternatives to top-down development plans, highlighting resistance led by Indigenous peoples who have fought back against genocide and ongoing threats to their survival.

Mesoamerica is a cultural and geographic region that forms a thin land bridge (or isthmus) between North and South America and the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans -- making this region highly strategic for international trade. Due to its climate and geography, Mesoamerica is one of the most biodiverse areas on the planet.



Mega-development projects and extractive industries spell a death sentence for the ecosystems and land-based communities of the region.

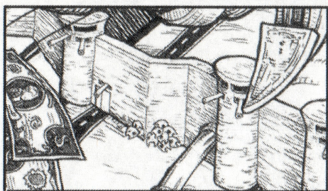
PAVING THE WAY FOR FREE TRADE

Since the invasion of Hernán Cortes' metal clad armies in 1519, a long succession of foreign colonizers and transnational corporations have occupied and exploited Mesoamerica. The U.S. State and corporate interests have referred to Mexico and Central America as their "backyard" or "banana republic" since the early 1800s. Now with free trade agreements working to eliminate so many "barriers" to trade (like environmental and labor rights), industry is all the more eager to develop infrastructure in Mesoamerica to exploit the region.



In 2001, the Mexican President and the Inter-American Development Bank introduced a plan to literally pave the way for implementing free trade policies. Named Plan Puebla Panama (PPP), the original plan included the southern states of Mexico (from Puebla) and the countries of Central America (to Panama). After fierce opposition throughout the region, the PPP underwent a public relations makeover and in 2008 was renamed the Mesoamerican Integration and Development Project. The plan now includes the Dominican Republic, and Colombia. To the South, Project Mesoamerica connects to IIRSA, an equivalent plan for integration, trade, and industrial development in South America.

Project Mesoamerica consists of 8 initiatives to “strengthen regional integration and promote economic and social development”, but the bulk of the funding is going towards large-scale infrastructure projects for transportation, to increase “market competitiveness” by moving high volumes of commerce through the region. These highways, ports, and canals connect with factory zones, mines and other resource extraction, and large scale energy projects that power it all. These plans are unfolding in the context of the expanding War on Drugs, which has led to dramatically increased violence and militarization.



COMPASS ROSE



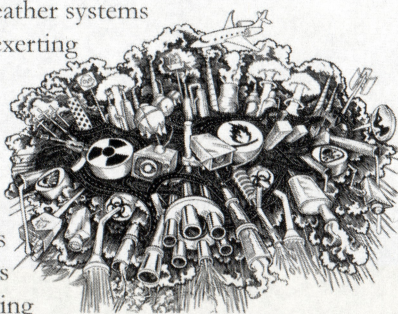
The compass rose, flanked by mermaids, orients us to this map of the global economy. The compass is a roulette wheel where corporations recklessly gamble with the future of the region, the ball bouncing over the logos of foreign investors who are steering local economies towards export. Railroads and tanks circle the game, reminding us of the violent history of the United Fruit Company (now Chiquita) in Central America: controlling large tracts of land, repressing workers, and even supporting a coup that led to decades of dictatorship in Guatemala, overthrowing a democratically elected President who tried to redistribute land to the people. The banana and coffee industries have benefited from the use of military force and violence to take control of some of the most arable land -- in order to produce high value breakfast for the global North.

THE TRADE WINDS

On all sides of the map, weather systems illustrate the global forces exerting pressure on the region.

The North Cloud

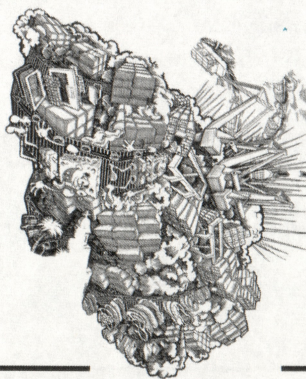
A dark cloud from the North puts high pressure on the world as it creates a storm of violence. This pressure system is the driving force behind military invasions and the War on Drugs, global economic policies, corporate interests, and consumerism. Pushing these agendas forward, the cloud rains down military violence, weapons, pollution, pesticides, and cultural invasion.



The Hurricane in the South

A hurricane of unnatural disasters rips through the southern hemisphere, devastating already marginalized communities and reminding us that we're not “all in this together.” Though industrialized countries in the global North are causing this climate chaos, the first and worst impacts of climate change are being felt by the global South. Governments and corporations are finding ways to profit from increasingly frequent severe storms and weather, a form of “disaster capitalism” that takes advantage of crises as opportunities to push through their economic agendas.

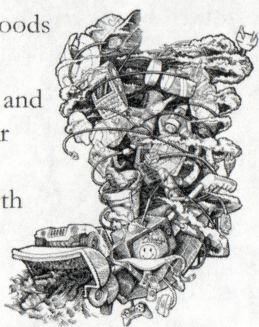
In the East: the typhoon of mass production



The blind face of expanding production appears as a typhoon at sea. The stormfront steamrolls forward as a dark cloud wall, spilling out cheap parts filling endless rows of containers destined for the trade routes cutting through Mesoamerica.

In the West: the whirlwind of disposable consumerism

The insatiable appetite for disposable goods controls the West Wind. Sucking up container ships from the East Wind and spitting out a trash barge, the Consumer Vortex in the West creates a tornado of swirling detritus. Demand from North America and Europe, combined with accelerating mass manufacturing in East and South Asia, exert intense pressure to open up more passages through the isthmus of Central America.

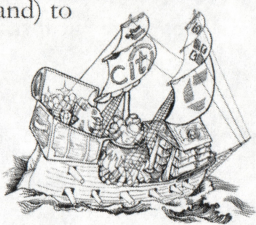


COLONIALISM PAST & PRESENT

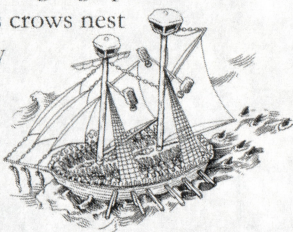
Modern industrial cargo boats morphed with ships from the "Age of Expansion" sail across the map, some hauling away cash crops and others bringing imports.

Three of these ships tell the story of the Triangle Trade of the late 1500s to early 1800s, the Atlantic Slave Trade circuit that relied on trafficking gold, sugar, and humans. Rum, made from sugar, was moved across the ocean to Africa and used to corrupt local leaders into facilitating the slave hunt. European colonists then shipped enslaved peoples to the sugar plantations in the Caribbean, where sugar was picked up and sent to Europe (and New England) to turn into rum, completing the triangle.

The Gold boat has a full trunk of precious metals stolen from the Americas. It melts down culturally meaningful metalwork into bars of gold, and is propelled by the sails of modern banks, which continue this legacy of accumulating wealth through systems of oppression.



Led by King Kool-Aid, the Sugar boat scoops piles of sugar into our food with its oars and relies on wage slavery to produce sugar cheaply while maintaining high profits. The slave ship, with its crows nest guard towers and security cameras, connects the legacy of slavery to the modern prison system, which heavily incarcerates and surveilles communities of color in North America.



Cash crops for export

Some of the ships carry natural resources out of the region, from precious fresh water to oil reserves.

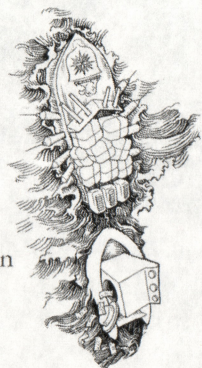
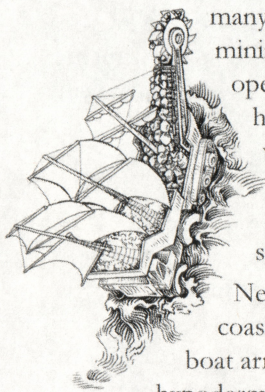
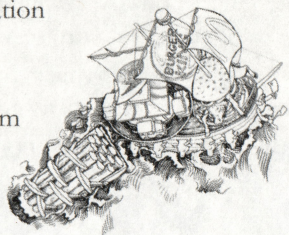
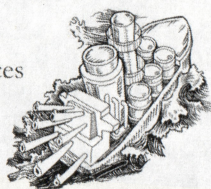
The beef boat has a clear-cut in tow, a reminder of the massive deforestation caused by cattle ranching.

A heavily loaded mining ship that resembles a dump truck departs from Central America, its sails carrying

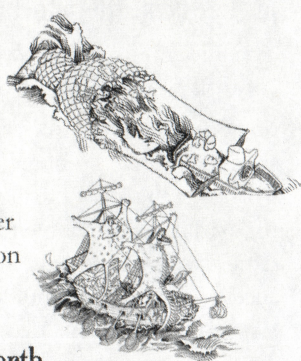
the logos of just two of the many Canadian mining companies

operating in the region. Canada is the #1 holder of mining concessions around the world, and home to some of the worst environmental offenders and human rights violators in the mining sector.

Near the Colombian coast, a drug trafficking boat armed with hypodermic needles speeds away with its illicit cargo. Not far behind, the CIA's money laundering machine is a reference to the CIA's direct involvement in profiting off the drug trade.



A reminder that over-extraction of resources is not only happening on land, the giant offshore fishing boat's enormous net scoops up every sea creature in its path. The illegal animal trade boat ferries out exotic animals, caught by poachers after infrastructure projects and deforestation displaced these endangered creatures from their native habitat.



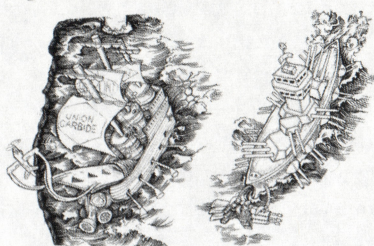
Coming in from the North



While the local animals are exported away, cartoon animals come in to replace them. Icons of mass media and consumer culture sail the seas on a Coca-Cola bottle.

A gun ship carried in by the storm cloud in the North brings military aid in the form of weapons wrapped up with a bow.

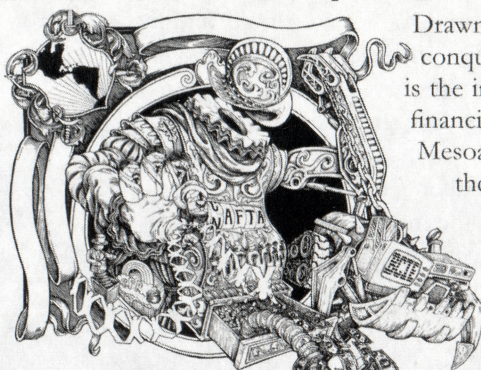
Close by another ship carries toxic chemical imports, equipped with a runway for the crop duster planes used to spray pesticides and herbicides on tropical fruit export crops.



INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

In the corners of the map, four faceless characters are in control from behind the scenes: a conqueror, a doctor (of the economy), a judge and a gambling banker.

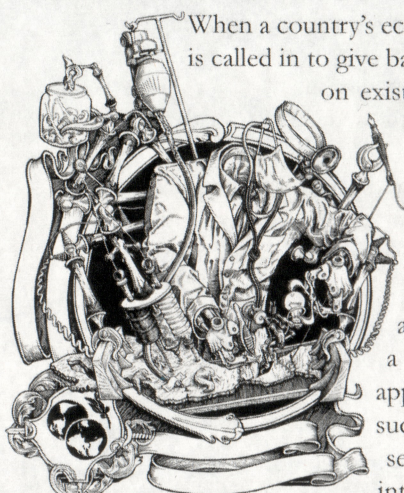
IDB - Inter-American Development Bank



Drawn as a Spanish conquistador, the IDB is the initial and biggest financier of Project Mesoamerica and is the regional arm of the World Bank. Gas lines, oil pipelines, and toll highways flow from the cash

register drawer of the IDB. The face of the register shows one free trade agreement rolling into the next, cashing in on the elimination of barriers to the "open market" in North and Central America. The IDB relies on its finger-puppet governments to shake down the public (paper dolls) to pay the interest on loans. The BCIE (Central American Bank for Economic Integration) serves as an ATM to supply cash for more publicly unpopular projects, chained to the IDB like a bulldog because of its more aggressive approach to lending.

IMF- International Monetary Fund



When a country's economy is in crisis, the IMF is called in to give bailout loans for the interest on existing debt and implements

Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPS) that tie harsh conditions to these new loans. In the operating room, the IMF is gutting public services and applying leeches as a reference to its cure-all approach of using SAPS to suck the life out of the public sector and force them into even higher interest

payments. Dam-defibrillators apply "shock therapy" to the economy and keep the patient (Mesoamerica) pinned to the surgeon's table. The syringe is symbolic of IMF conditions that open up the economy to extraction.

WTO - The World Trade Organization

The WTO serves as a judge of international trade disputes, favoring corporate interests at the expense of workers and the environment. The crumbling institution holds scales of injustice, protecting the interests of the 1% while leaving the people of the world to hang. A riot cop puppet

tries to crack down on anti-globalization protesters in a game of whack-a-mole, but their diverse tactics allow them to continue popping up.

The World Bank

The World Bank, another important lending institution behind Project Mesoamerica, is portrayed as a potbellied gambler, addicted to the fossil fuel economy. The World Bank is responsible in part for the Clean Development

Mechanism (CDM), shown as a shady coin-operated chess game that the Bank plays with itself. The CDM allows dirty industry to get credits for financing or building 'green' projects in the global South including big dams.

The credits are said to "offset" the pollution that company emits so they don't have to cut back on polluting activities. Bulldozers and excavators push all the chess pieces out of their path, regardless of whether they're on the "dirty" or "clean" energy side of the game.

The World Bank pours dollars into the carbon market by cutting out coins from a cloud of smoke while its other arm plays the slot machines, taking its chances with natural disasters. On the poker table in front of the Bank, the chips are stacked up against the global South. With loans tied to conditions like economic bear traps, the house always wins.

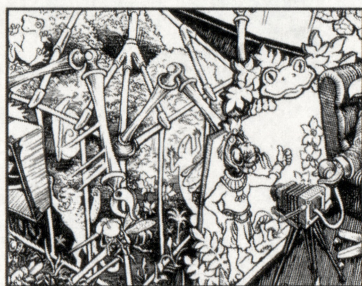
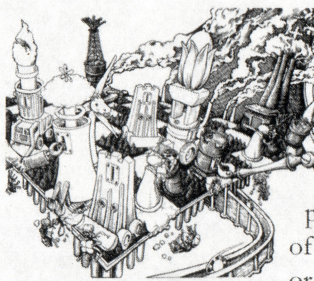
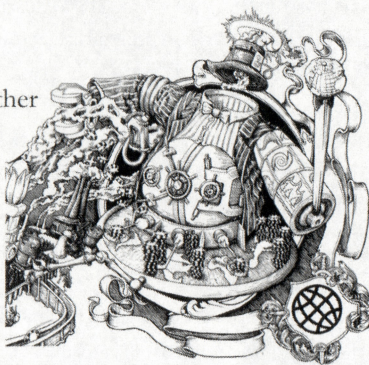
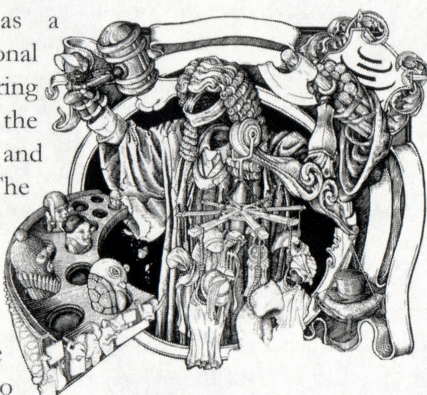
GREENWASHING

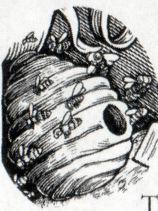
Major extractive industries sit at a boardroom table and cut up a cake in the shape of Mesoamerica, honoring 500 years of colonialism. These disguised, greenwashing

industry representatives steal natural resources from Central America, as they hustle a small sampling of biodiversity onto Noah's Ark.

Under the guise of conservation, the biosphere reserve nearby appears as a guarded greenhouse - particularly referring to the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, a project of the World Bank. This private-sector approach to

conservation leads to evictions of Indigenous communities who have long been stewards of the land, while allowing industry to access "protected" areas for activities including oil prospecting. Eager for a photo op to improve their public image, the greenwashers hold up a false backdrop to attract visitors and investors from afar.





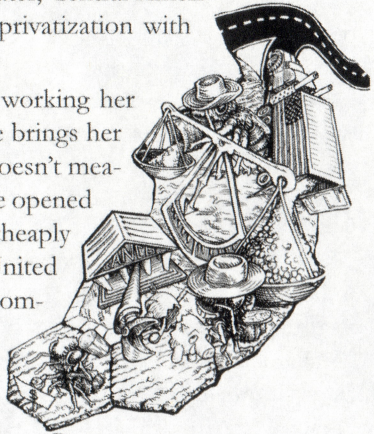
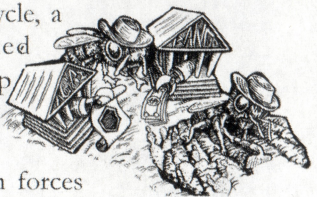
EL CAMPO SIN CAMPESINO

At the top of this cycle, a communally-farmed beehive is broken up into small hexagons.

The Department of

Agriculture and the bank join forces to push for individual land titles and credit to finance this dismantling of collective and Indigenous lands. In 1992, anticipating the signing of NAFTA, the Mexican government changed its constitution to allow for the privatization of communal lands; a decade later, Central American countries faced the same privatization with the signing of CAFTA-DR.

After a long and hard season working her little hexagon plot, Farmer Bee brings her corn to market, but her corn doesn't measure up. Free trade policies have opened the borders to dumping of cheaply produced corn from the United States, and Farmer Bee can't compete with prices set by an open market flooded with grain from subsidized, large-scale agriculture.



When the bank comes to collect the interest on her land, she must break the bank, sell her land and join the many other economic refugees headed to the city to look for work. Farmer Bee takes one of the only jobs available, in a *maquiladora* (sweatshop), where she works in unsafe conditions for low wages.



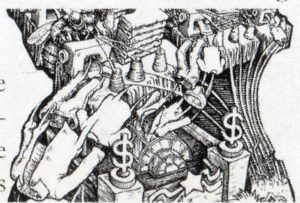
The sewing machines in the maquiladora are sucking up traditional textiles and spitting out a line of mass-produced brand name clothing

to flood the shopping malls of the global marketplace. The mall has replaced the church as

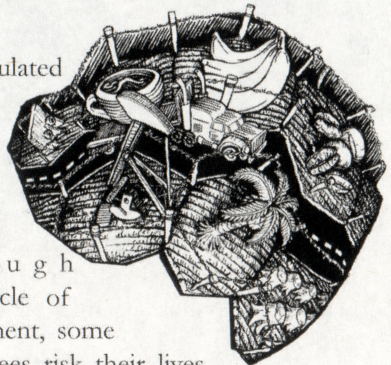


the new center of worship in town.

Looking deeper, we see that the church was built directly on top of a Mayan pyramid, a literal reference to colonial history.

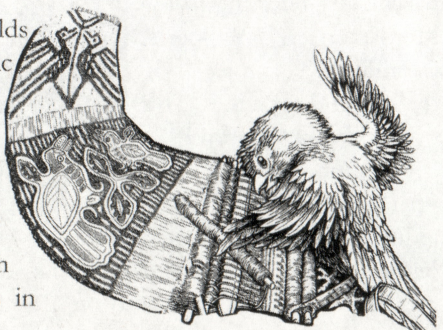


Meanwhile, the de-populated rural areas have been bought up for monocultures of cash crops and extractive energy projects.



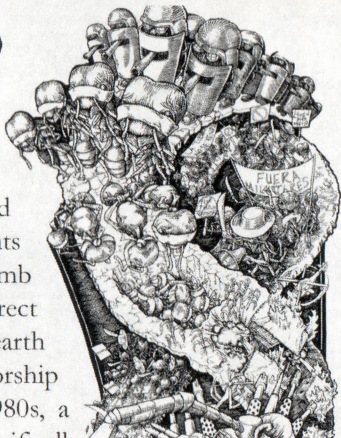
Through this cycle of displacement, some of the bees risk their lives crossing the border to find work. They disappear off to the north, maybe never to be heard from again.

The Quetzal bird holds on to the social fabric of communities and steadily weaves cultural resistance, keeping alive textile traditions and the art of communicating through patterns and drawings in the threads.



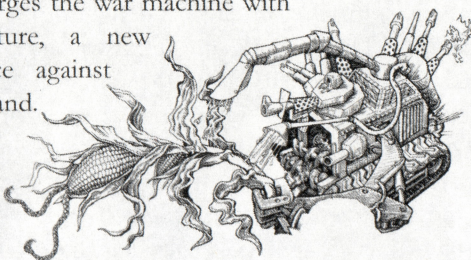
RESISTANCE AND REPRESSION

On the right side of the map, swarms of ants rise and fall in a cycle of resistance and repression. Troops force ants into a mass grave, and firebomb their crops and villages, a direct reference to the scorched earth policy of the military dictatorship in Guatemala in the early 1980s, a genocide campaign that specifically targeted the Ixil Maya people. Guatemala's civil war is emblematic of the entire region's history, stemming from a long history of land grabs, inequality, racism, and US intervention. Rising up from below, social movements continue to regroup and carry on struggles against militarization and for land reform, sovereignty, and justice - even when faced with the trauma of state brutality, mass arrests, and forced disappearances.



A tank-tractor merges the war machine with industrial agriculture, a new form of violence against people and the land.

After World War II, factories that made tanks and explosives for war were put to

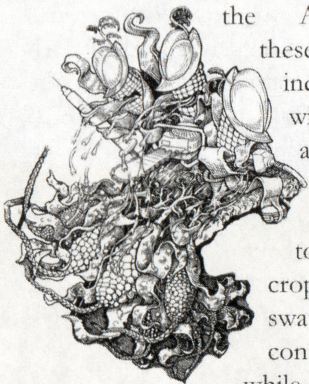


new use and started pumping out tractors and fertilizers instead, leading to the world wide Green Revolution and corporate control of agriculture. A mother stalk of corn is being assaulted and violated by the tank-tractor, sprayed with GMO seed and a toxic medley of chemicals.

A Trojan horse rolls in, sponsored by big agribusinesses who claim to be the solution to world hunger. An army of genetically modified corn charges out, ready to attack.

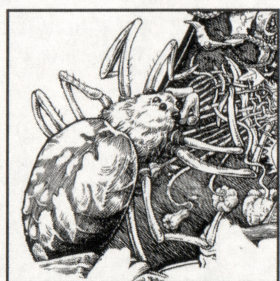


Like the Spanish conquistadors who used biological warfare, spreading disease to Indigenous people of the Americas,



these "corn"quistadors are destroying indigenous corn and food sovereignty with genetic contamination. One also wields a gas pump weapon as a reference to ethanol, an agrofuel from corn that is a false alternative to fossil fuels. Production of mono-cropped biofuels takes over huge swaths of land, depletes the soil, and contaminates water with fertilizers, while failing to address the consumption of fuel in the global North.

Below it all, the ants re-emerge again as a symbol of popular resistance. While they are protesting at the top of the scene, here they are busy tending to the life cycle of corn that feeds and sustains their community: sowing and saving seeds, exchanging local varieties, and grinding corn into flour.



The Orb-weaver spider, mirroring the efforts of the Quetzal bird on the opposite side, painstakingly works on weaving topsoil back together and healing the land.

open the poster for

THE VIEW FROM THE GROUND



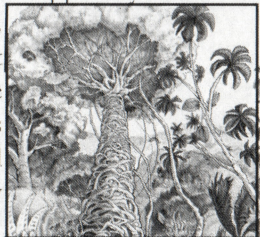
The Ceiba tree's spreading buttress roots hold the scenes together and tell an overarching story of rootedness. This tree is a gathering place, a beacon in the center of town that brings people together to share stories and announce calls to action.

A multitude of characters symbolize strategies and tactics for building autonomy and defending land. Every critter in the poster is based on a real species native to somewhere between Mexico and Colombia. Over 400 individual species of insects and animals, and over 100 plant species, give a glimpse of the incredible biodiversity of the region.

Two strands of ancestor animals spiral down around the trunk of the Ceiba tree. These creatures are all extinct, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable, but in spirit they're alive and fighting fiercely. The strands are interwoven like the double helix of a DNA strand, reminding us of the interconnectedness of the web of life.



The rainforest holds its richness in the upper layers of the canopy, which nurtures the life below. Once trees are cut down, the soil left behind is weak, and ecological damage is irreparable. The loss of rainforests is mirrored by the loss of cultural heritage, which is also being rapidly fragmented and eroded.



THE SPINAL CORD OF PLAN MESOAMERICA



In the top right corner, power lines march over the horizon. Under construction since 2007, the Central American Electric Interconnection System (SIEPAC) lays the groundwork for powering factories and industrial infrastructure. Power lines that would ultimately stretch

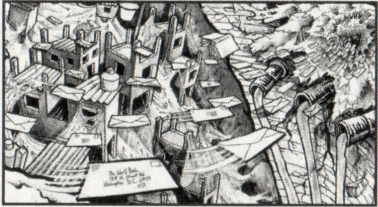
from Colombia to North America particularly threaten the communities and ecosystems of the Darien Gap, a large stretch of wetlands and forests along the border between Panama and Colombia where there are no roads (the only gap in the Panamerican Highway). While energy is generated to meet the demands of big business, some rural communities lack access to electricity for basic needs or face exorbitant rates. A mob of birds flies at the tower, knocking it down and re-wiring for energy on a local scale.

Hydroelectric Dams

One foot of the power tower sucks its energy from a hydroelectric dam, flooding out entire villages and putting vast areas of habitat underwater. The dam, dubbed Clean Development, is backed with military might and produces electricity to power far removed factories and transport routes.



A wave of letters from the public flies at the dam, as people take up their pens in defense of their community. The high volume of public opinion fractures the dam and opens up time and space for a variety of resistance tactics to be used.



In Mexico, La Parota dam was recently canceled after 10 years of organized resistance to it, including blockades and legal action.

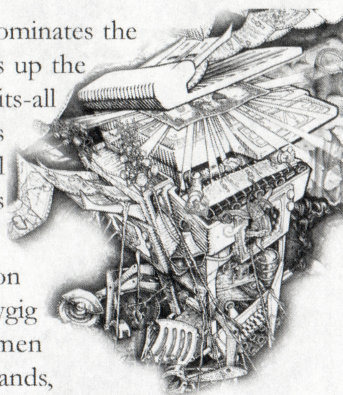
SOCIAL SPIDERS

in the shadow of the power lines, spiders stitch together an urban squat as they collaboratively rebuild their community. Economic forces have pushed them to the margins of the city, yet they continue working together. These social spiders are not territorial or aggressive like many solitary species, but instead cooperate to build massive nests to care for their entire community. In the face of an economic system that considers urban squats to be illegitimate, the spiders are a reminder of urban struggles for land & survival.

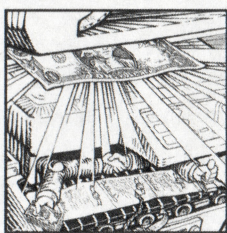


THE LAND GRAB

A monolithic copy machine dominates the right side of the poster. It rips up the land and spews out one-size-fits-all development plans. Gas pumps in the machine write with oil barrel toner on the land that's forced through the rollers.



The pre-written plans speed on to the second level where whirlygig



businessmen shake hands, rubber stamp permits, and exchange stacks of cash. The top of the copier spits out blueprints for large-scale infrastructure projects.

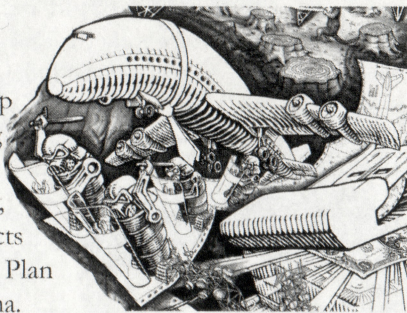
Bulldozer

The road-paving bulldozer cuts through rural and urban areas alike in order to provide easy and quick getaway routes for trucks hauling their goods across borders. Over 80% of Project Mesoamerica's funding is going towards transportation infrastructure, but these are highways built for big industry, not local communities. Superhighways that claim to "connect Mesoamerica" are actually making large areas of land impassable for pedestrians and migratory animals, displacing homes and productive farmland, and charging high tolls that limit public use.

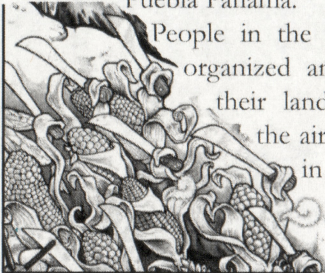


Airport

A cornfield rises up against an airplane trying to land at a new airport outside of Mexico City, one of the first projects proposed as part of Plan Puebla Panama.



People in the town of San Salvador Atenco organized and successfully fought to keep their land from being expropriated for the airport. This image of campesinos in Atenco, wielding machetes to defend their land, quickly became emblematic of popular protest against the PPP.



Three fronts of resistance working together

Farmers, teachers and students, and workers are joining forces to tackle the tentacles of the land grabbing copy machine. These important social sectors are represented by three of the most important crops in the region, culturally and nutritionally:

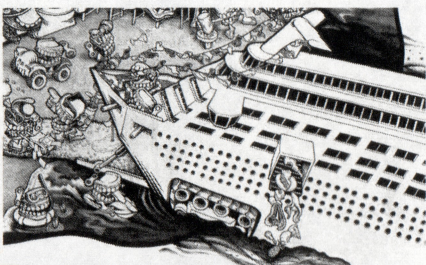


the three sisters of corn, beans, and squash.



A pedal-powered media machine rides into the scene, using media by and for the people. They cut through the stream of development plans from the copier with their political posters, as they record stories from the frontlines and broadcast them through independent

The free media machine catapults seed bombs at the land grab. The seed balls are a mix of seeds, soil, and clay that serve to reclaim damaged land for cultivation.



A cruise ship invades the coast in the bottom right-hand corner of the poster. The ship is based off an amphibious landing craft used by

These chompy teeth tourists are going on holiday to unwind as they gobble up a packaged experience. They don't see beyond billboards that offer up Indigenous culture for sale and entertainment, and local people for serving food and cleaning toilets.



Relying on racism, the tourist industry exploits local communities while selling the idea that a privileged few are entitled to their vacationland.

MARKET

Shopping carts pushed by genetically modified palm, corn, and soy are rushing in on newly paved highways, attempting to invade a traditional local market with an arsenal of junk food and copyrighted genetic bombs. The market resists the invasion with the strength of its cultural and ecological diversity, forming a blockade of DNA strands to keep out these mono-cropped monsters of industrial agriculture.

Meanwhile, an 18-wheeler truck, hauling in mass produced, highly subsidized, and nutritionally void "food products"



confronts another blockade on the right side of the market. This blockade is formed by youth who are also sending these big brands a message: take back your trash!

Inside the market, local economies and native food systems thrive. All the vendors are pollinators, the creatures that flowering plants need to produce fruit. Providing habitat for pollinators is an essential part of healthy, biodiverse farming.



The yucca moth, for example, is the sole pollinator of yucca; without this moth, the yucca plant can't go to seed. All the shoppers in the market are seed dispersers, and the market itself represents a living seed



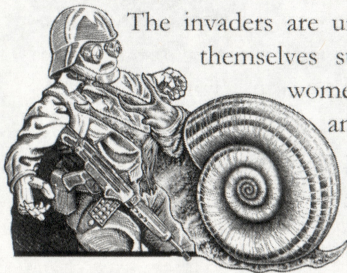
bank. Everywhere there is food in this scene, seeds are included: vendors are packaging, exchanging, collecting, and sprouting seeds, nurturing hundreds of local varieties of plants and protecting their food sovereignty for generations to come.

Women on the front lines

The use of force against people has taken many forms throughout the Americas, including death squads, private security forces, militarized riot police, organized crime, and plain clothed paramilitary. Behind the podium, a faceless dictator controls the many forms of military force that carry out the list of conquests, and reminds us of the outside influence on militarization.



The invaders are unable to advance as they find themselves surrounded by a blockade of women defending their land, safety, and community.

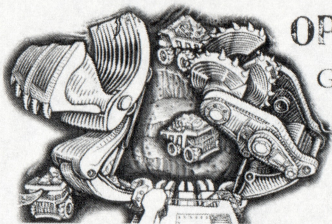


Each character is using her natural defenses, like the porcupine who has shot her quills into the face of the plainclothes paramilitary. Women and children put themselves on the front lines during countless standoffs between armed forces and unarmed civilians in defense of their communities.



Ancestors. ¡Presente!

An ancient glyptodont swings her armored tail, representing the spirits of ancestors that are being disturbed by the mine. Skeletons of extinct animals appear in a few other scenes, their presence reminding us of all who have come before us in the struggles for justice.



OPEN PIT MINE

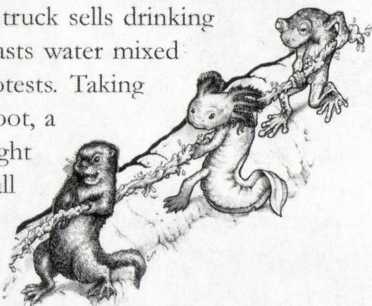
Giant mining machines dig into the earth, employing dangerous and exploitative labor practices while disregarding the environment and health of nearby communities. Mining sites are also often defended by armed forces, leading to violent repression of any opposition. Cerrejón, the world's largest open pit coal mine, forcibly removed Indigenous Wayuu and Afro Colombian communities from their land. Cyanide leaching from Goldcorp's Marlin mine in Guatemala has severely contaminated the groundwater. Both have served as warnings and case studies for the increasingly organized resistance to mining across the Americas.

WATER FOR PROFIT



The monster of water privatization looms over the stream, seizing water from the commons and locking it away with dollar values. Giant drinking straws feed into a tower of industries that rob communities of their drinking water through overuse and pollution.

Stacked from top to bottom are: bottled water, mining, textiles, cattle ranching, and golf courses. The water trucks on chains are fierce attack dogs protecting the interests of the invader: one truck sells drinking water, while the other blasts water mixed with tear gas to disperse protests. Taking a stance on the nearby tree root, a trio of water creatures are caught in a tug of war. Pulling with all their might, they work to take back the water for its use as a life giving force.



Water for life



Moss covered toad statues illustrate the age-old uses of water - drinking, cooking, bathing, and washing.



At the top of the stream an Uo toad signifies the rainy season and fertility brought by water.



A reminder that water is life, the toads' everyday use of water for basic needs is a form of resistance to selling off water to private interests.

Reclaiming water from pollution

Underfoot of the menacing water grabber, a team of bacteria form a bucket-brigade to collect the polluted water and reclaim it through a "living machine" filtration system. Pools of living organisms from reeds, lilies, and water hyacinth to snails and clams work together in a multistage process of water purification.



PIRATE RADIO

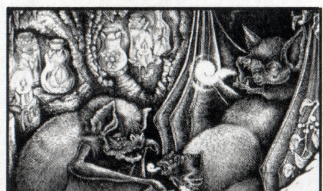
The independent radio station powered by a small-scale water wheel beams out news and culturally valuable music over the airways and transmits critical information about social movements.





GOLDEN TOADS

Frogs and toads are highly sensitive to changes in an ecosystem and serve as warning signs of environmental catastrophe. The demise of the golden toad marked the first time that the scientific establishment officially attributed an extinction to climate change, but they are not the only victims. A ring of eggs reminiscent of cycles of the moon floats in the water around the mating toads, reminding us of how abundant they once were.



BIRTH

Deep inside a womb-like cave formed by the tree roots, a scene of fertility portrays a vampire bat midwife assisting a birth.

She is surrounded by medicinal herbs and plants related to fertility and women's reproductive health. Midwifery and other traditional medical practices have resiliently survived despite the biomedical model's attempts to discredit and destroy them.

COASTAL MONOCULTURE

A bulldozer crashes through the roots of a mangrove ecosystem, dragging in fencing and an industrial shrimp farm in its wake. Mangroves protect the coast from erosion with their massive root systems, creating a unique ecosystem that is a nursery and sanctuary for young aquatic creatures. Industrial shrimp



farming is a rapidly growing industry that threatens mangroves worldwide.

This polluting monoculture displaces the marine life which provides essential protein sources for local communities.



REFUGEES

Crying out in alarm, a flock of birds bursts into the air above the disturbed mangrove forest. The birds clutch their nests and young, forced to flee as their habitat is destroyed by infrastructure projects. The birds also tell a story of people who fled the scorched earth policies, genocide, and civil wars in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua from the 1960s-1980s. The broken nests show the destruction and separation of families in exile.

RETURNING

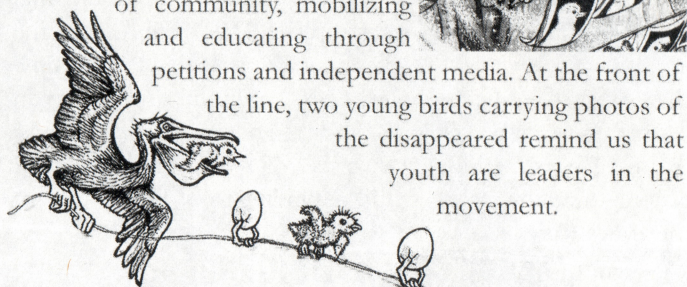


Emerging from the forest canopy, the birds return home after the war. Some of them had organized in exile and fought to return home as recognized organizations.

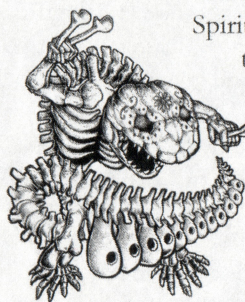


Youth are recording historic memory by interviewing their elders and broadcasting to the public.

The birds carry examples of organizing and solidarity: a childcare cooperative, saving seeds and planting hope for the future, weaving as a metaphor for the social fabric of community, mobilizing and educating through



FIESTA



Spirits and the living mingle together in this lively community festival, as they sing and dance in honor of the four elements surrounding the scene: earth, air, water,



and fire. Gathered around the fire, elders and ancestors pass down wisdom to younger generations and share stories of resistance. Wins, losses, and the journey between are all reasons to come together. When existence is resistance, the seemingly simple act of gathering carries great significance.

HISTORICAL MEMORY

In the roots below the bat cave and the fiesta, caterpillar youth are painting a mural of a monarch butterfly in a field of corn, the pattern on its wings morphing into strong fists of struggle. The butterfly has been widely used in today's migrant rights movements as a symbol of freedom and courage to cross borders.



The caterpillars in this scene were inspired by meeting with HIJOS in Guatemala, a group formed a few years after the peace accords in 1996. They are the children of those who were disappeared during the civil war, still fighting for justice. Murals educate about the past and keep

collective memory alive, using art to transform a violent history into something filled with beauty and power. The youth are surrounded by references to memory and oral history. Flowers, plants, a conch shell, music, and traditional weavings are all passing knowledge and stories down through generations, their voices spiraling out in the form of *volutas*. The *voluta* is a Mayan glyph representing speaking and listening. Throughout the poster it symbolizes the power of the word.



THE COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY



Representatives of communities affected by Project Mesoamerica gather in a circle at the center of the poster to discuss their common struggles and plans for collective action. Some of the characters bring items from their

homes, signaling that they've traveled far to be here, and that organizing efforts have been coordinated across the region. Unlike the top-down decision making that governs the "official" plans for the



region, many voices are valued in this process of participatory, horizontal communication. The stories transmitted at this gathering join together in a spiral that symbolizes the conversation taking place. Documenting and spreading the word is also essential; recording equipment appears around the circle to foster communication between generations and across cultures.



THE ANT SWARM



A giant swarm of ants comes down the trunk of the Ceiba tree. The ants, like so many other little critters, play an essential role in the ecosystem. Scurrying beneath the dirt, they aerate the soil, making it possible for plants to grow, essentially laying the foundations for life on earth. While these ants seem small compared to the entire forest, they outweigh all other animals and plants combined. The ants remind us that great changes are in the hands of the small and many. Working tirelessly, these miniscule creatures embody the phrase, *la revolución es el trabajo de las hormigas* (the revolution is ant's work). Little by little, their collective work has the strength to achieve great transformations, which reminds us that together, we can create tremendous changes in the world around us.

Some of the ants proudly carry messages from Indigenous communities in southern Mexico who have been slowly and steadily building autonomy for several decades. These sayings are Zapatista principles and also come from their experience of building "good government" councils, which encourage frequent rotation of leadership: "lead by obeying" the



people in your community, they advise; "work

from below, without seeking to rise to power;" "walk by asking questions"... Each ant is a different species, reminding us that the beauty of the world lies

in its diversity, of cultures, of languages, of ways of being: "we are the same because we are different;" "a world where many worlds fit." In the face of so many threats to the diversity of life on this planet, the ants converge at the base of the Ceiba to declare, "Ya basta! Enough!"

STORIES OF BEES AND ECONOMIES

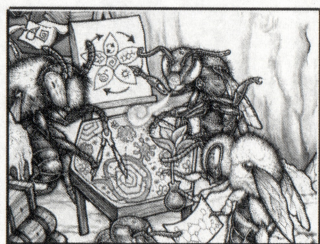
As European colonists invaded Central America, they brought with them the invasive European honey bee, which aggressively began to push the native Mesoamerican stingless bees out of their ecological niche. Today, deforestation, pollution, and industrial farming are destroying habitat and causing the collapse of pollinator species all over Central America. Bees are an indicator species, and the drastic decline of their populations may forecast a larger ecosystem collapse. Restoring native bee populations is vitally important to the health of ecosystems and agriculture globally, and is directly linked to the survival of Indigenous peoples and beekeeping knowledge. Traditional beekeeping is an intimate relationship between bees, people, culture, and the land.

Vanilla and stingless bees

Pollinators and the plants they pollinate need each other. Native *Melipona* bees and the vanilla plant share one of these specific symbiotic relationships. *Melipona* bees are the only natural pollinators of the delicate vanilla orchid. Without this specialized interaction, vanilla orchids would only survive by hand pollination, making vanilla one of the most labor intensive crops in the world.



AN ALTERNATIVE ECONOMY...



Design

Each terrace of the hive is buzzing as bees work on designing an economy to provide for their needs. As opposed to the accumulation of wealth that is central to the capitalist economy, this economy is centered around health, food, shelter, and wellbeing. The bees plan their economic system by studying the health and structure of their hive, taking notes, and mapping out routes for gathering local resources.

Production



Carpenter bees and other species of solitary bees show solidarity by building habitats for other pollinators.

A worker owned print shop produces paper from recycled materials.



Exchange

In contrast to the exploitative maps made by the colonizers, bumble bees, mason bees, and carder bees are mapping out a solidarity economy that is mutually beneficial. A bee on a conch shell phone busily takes orders while others prepare to send out bundles of heirloom seeds, honey, tortillas, candles, bee houses, and books, as part of a regional network that relies on local skills and goods.



Eating together

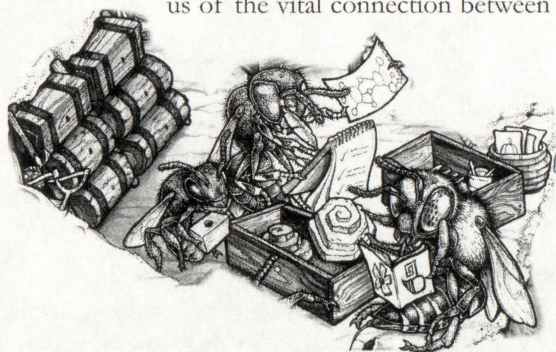
These bees have invited friends over for a meal and for a popular education workshop about direct trade. They explain how to connect with local farmers to get food straight from the farm to the table, cutting out the middleman. They use local bark to make DIY biogas that heats the *comal* for cooking tortillas; next to it the same bark is mixed with honey to make *balché*, a traditional fermented mead.



Dividing the hive

Bees work on dividing the hive, a skill passed down through the generations by oral tradition. The stingless bees are kept in a specially-made box, as the bee logs (stacked on the left side of this scene) are in short supply due to deforestation.

Survival of Melipona bees depends on knowledge from elder beekeepers. In conservation efforts, some scientists with "zoo" mentalities have destroyed hives they tried to protect by collecting them for study in labs. The stingless bees remind us of the vital connection between culture and ecology.



Reinvestment

Unlike the one-way flows of the global economy, resources in the hive are cycled and reinvested.

Seed saving

Harvesting seeds and saving them to grow a new set of crops next season, the bees build sustainable sovereign food systems that will continue to feed their hives for generations. Saving seed is an example of self-sufficiency and independence from industrial agriculture.



Composting

Turning food scraps and garden waste into lush fertile soil, the bees and worms build future food systems, literally starting from the ground up.



Most valued assets

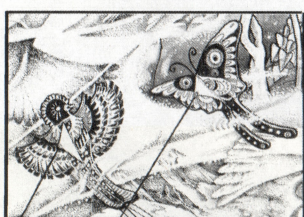
Safeguarded at the top of the hive, the bee larvae are highly valued as they provide the base of the next generation and an investment in the future. Seeds and eggs are the currency of the economy that runs this bee society; they are the concentrated



units that all life comes from, and speak to the symbiotic relationship between plants and pollinators.

Seeds of the future

As the larvae grow, so does their education. The newbees learn to cooperate and play together while pumping out honey with a seesaw. Other youth share what they've learned about the colonial



invasion of European stinging bees, through a mural and a play. Kites soar above, celebrating the young bees' irrepressible spirits.

Astronomers

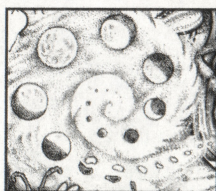
At the top of the hive, Melipona bees study the cosmos, learning from the cycles of the earth and moon. Informed by these natural cycles, the community can plan for planting and cultivating.



Globalization from below

Facing the serious dangers of colony collapse, over 50 bee species have come together to build an alternative economic system that emphasizes horizontal and equitable relationships, while providing the basic needs of their community.

The values of an extractive economy have led us to a mass extinction crisis and climate chaos. The holistic values of a solidarity economy are part of the antidote to this crisis. Like the bees, rebuilding local and regional networks can help us deal with the challenges and consequences of a rapidly changing planet. All the critters defending their land between the roots of the Ceiba are showing us the meaning of globalization from below: reaching out across borders, cultures, and generations to link movements and support each other's struggles for survival.



CROSS-POLLINATING THE GRASSROOTS

The Beehive Collective is a wildly-motivated, all-volunteer, activist art collective dedicated to "cross-pollinating the grassroots" by creating collaborative, anti-copyright images for use as educational and organizing tools. We work anonymously as word-to-image translators of complex global stories, gathered through conversations with affected communities.

Since 2000, we have disseminated more than 150,000 posters throughout the Americas, entirely by grassroots, hand-to-hand distribution! Our graphics have tackled issues from globalization, trade, and resource extraction, to energy, biotechnology, and climate change.

We strive to create holistic and accessible images that inspire critical reflection and strategic action.

Please get in touch to learn more about the Beehive!

The Beehive Design Collective

1 Elm Street

MACHIAS, MAINE 04654 USA

207 669 4117

pollinators@beehivecollective.org

www.beehivecollective.org



SPREAD THE WORD!

Like the bees on the pedal-powered media machine, it's up to you to make sure these stories get told. The Beehive Collective's work is anti-copyright, and available as clip art on our Graphics for the Commons DVD. As long as your work is non-commercial, you're welcome to sprinkle Beehive images all over the place. We just ask that you send us a copy or picture so we can fully appreciate it.

Host a Presentation, Workshop, or Poster Coloring Party!

We're excited to come share these graphics with your community. At venues large or small, Bees with portable murals & posters will gladly swarm your community to provide an interactive picture-lecture or custom-tailored workshop. If you're an educator, contact us to talk about ideas for bringing graphics into your classroom! We've also found that just setting out a poster and a box of colored pencils is a great way to spark conversation.

The story is always evolving...

Our first-hand story-gathering research is never over. Once a graphic is launched into the world, it collects more and more stories and takes on a life of its own. We are constantly learning and weaving new details into our presentations. Please share your stories with us!

More Resources Coming Soon

We are developing additional educational materials to accompany this poster, including a resource list to learn more, a coloring book for all ages, and a biodiversity field guide.

